

## SIMON DALE.

By ANTHONY HOPE.

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## CHAPTER V.

I AM FORBIDDEN TO FORGO.

It must be allowed that by no means to appear of perverse chances did I, desirous as was a staid, sober gentleman, but as a ruffler or abandoned gallant, have had a worse introduction to my life. To start with a duel would have been little, but a duel in such a cause and on behalf of such a lady, for I should seem to be fighting the battle of one whose name was past defending! would make my reputation ridiculous to the gay and often evil to the more decent people of the town. I thought enough on this sad side of the matter that night at the inn, and despair would have made a prey of me had I not hoped to clean myself to some degree by the step on which I had determined. For I was resolved to abandon the aid in my career that the King's unexpected favor had offered, and start afresh for myself, free from the illicit advantage of a place gained undeservingly. Yet amidst my chagrin, and in spite of my virtuous intentions, I found myself wondering that Cydaria had remembered; I will not protest that I found no pleasure in the thought; a young man whose pride was not touched by it would have reached a higher summit of severity or a lower depth of insensibility than was mine. Yet here also I had made vows of recompensation concerning which there was naught to say, but that, while very noble, they were in all likelihood most uncalculated for. What would or could Cydaria be to me now? She flew at bigger game. She had flung me a kindly crumb of remembrance; she would think that we were well quit, nay, that I was overpaid for my bruised heart and dismasted illusion.

It was a fine, fresh morning when Mr. Darrell and I set out for the place of meeting, he carrying a pair of swords. Mr. Jernyn had agreed to second my opponent, and I was glad to learn that the meeting was to be restricted to the principals, and not, as so often occurred, to embroil the friends also in a senseless quarrel. We walked briskly, and crossing the Oxford road at Holborn, we struck into the fields beyond Montague's. How! We were first at the rendezvous, but had not yet met it before our enemies appeared, containing Lord Carlford, his second, and a squire. The chairman hastening set down their burdens, withdrew some way off and, being left to ourselves, made our preparations as quickly as we might. Darrell especially urged speed, for it seemed that a rumor of the affair had got about the town, and he had no desire for spectators.

Now, although I desire to write without malice, and to render fullest justice to those whom I had least cause to love, I am bound to say that my Lord Carlford seemed to be most bitterly incensed against me, whereas I was in no way incensed against him. In the first instance, he had offended without premeditation, for he had not known who I was. His subsequent insolence might find excuse in the peremptory phrasing of my demand for apology, too curt, perhaps, for a young and untried man. Hence forced me to fight, but nothing forced me to hate, and I asked no better than that we should both escape with as little hurt as the laws of the game allowed. His mood was different. He had been bearded, and was in mind to give my beard a pull—*i.e.* a snap in a metaphor, for beard! I had none—and possessing some reputation as a swordsman, he could not well afford to let me go untouched. An old sergeant of Gen. Cromwell's, resident at Norwich, had instructed me in the use of the foils, but I was not my lord's equal, and I set it down to my good luck and his fury that I came off no worse than the event proved. For he made at me with great impetuosity, and from beginning to end of the affair I was wholly concerned in defending myself. Much that I achieved successfully for some moments, and I heard Mr. Jernyn say, "But he stands his ground well." Then came a turning point, followed by a fierce attack and a sharp pang in my left arm, near the shoulder, which caused me to drop my sword. This was a moment. The seconds darted in between us, and Darrell caught me round the waist.

"I'm glad it was no worse," I whispered, to him with a smile; then I turned very sick and the field started to go round and round me. For some minutes I knew nothing more, but when I revived the surgeon was busy in binding up my arm, while the three gentlemen stood together in a group a little way apart. My leech shook under me, and doubtless I was as white as my mother's best linen; but I was very happy, feeling that my honor was safe, and that I had been as it were baptized of the company of gentlefolk. I had no time to think, but I had to leave him to the surgeon, and I heard my master call to him, "Let him go." I then left him in the doorway of the inn, darning me to forget. And my brain seemed all whirling and swirling as I walked down the lane,

to thank you for a good remembrance of me and they support the imputation of unrighteousness with marvellous composure, as long as no man takes it in hand to force them to raise it. They have the right, though many changes have passed over the country and the times; so will they be, although more transformations come.

But I, too, had last name stirred them to a new mood. Friend Phineas perceived the effect that he had made, but set a wrong judgment on it. Taking it as ground for encouragement, he took his stand, and, with a stout, courageous, and so battered the unhappy subject of his censures that my ears tingled, and gently stroked him, but at a certain point, with a dirty red face, was before me with him. Following his way irresistibly through the ranks of combatants, he burst into a roar of laughter, waggling his head significantly enough, growled out:

"Say what you will of Castlemaine and the rest. Master Staner, but keep your tongue off me."

A murmur of applause ran round. They knew Nelly; here in the lane was her kingdom.

"Nelly! Nelly!" said the porter, "the porter is here."

Phineas was no coward, and threats served only to fan the flame of his zeal. That asserted itself in his eyes, and I saw that I must couple myself in with his head. His iron frame would crack and break in the grasp of his mighty assailant, and I was loath that the fall should not be fatal. I went to Whitehall to-morrow, and why?

"With my lord Carlford. The reason I need not weary you with."

"Be quiet, sir," said I, "your master."

"But it was true."

"I'm sorry, but I must fight."

"Why, if it were true?"

I made her no answer. She went and seated herself at the table, looking at me with eyes which seemed to be reading to read pain and puzzle.

"I wish you would, please you, Simon," she said, with a coaxing glance that at least relieved me.

"I thought you would like to know it."

"I'm sorry, but I must fight."

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